

## **I. BACKGROUND**

This *Progress Report on Implementing the Land Use Element of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan: Fiscal Years 1999-2002* documents how the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan has been implemented. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan amendments included a provision for the Mayor to submit a report on the progress made in implementing the Land Use Element of the Plan not less than once every four years, beginning March 31, 2000. Due to limited staff (the Office of Planning had only nine planners in early 2000), OP was unable to prepare both the progress report in 2000 *and* review large and controversial Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Adjustment cases.

The Office of Planning, assisted by other District agencies and organizations, has prepared this report and is pleased to present it to City Council. While previous progress report solely documented government actions, this report attempts to capture key projects from both the private and public sectors given the economic boom this city experienced during these years.

### **How this Report is Organized**

This report has three sections:

*Section I* provides background on the methodology for developing this report.

*Section II* highlights key activities during FY 1999-2002 for six broad sections of the Land Use Element: Residential Neighborhoods, Commercial Areas, Production and Technical Employment Areas, Public and Institutional Areas, Metrorail Station Area Development, and Land Use Maps.

*Section III*, the Land Use Geographic Matrix, provides detailed information on land use progress. The organization of Section III has changed from the FY 1992-1993 progress report. Instead of listing all activities together, this report groups activities by ward and then by the Comprehensive Plan's land use policies of Development Opportunity Areas, Housing Opportunity Areas, Special Treatment Areas, and Master Plans. These policies are described in the Land Use Element and represented on the Comprehensive Plan Map 2, *District of Columbia Generalized Land Use Policies Map*. The last section of the matrix describes other areas where significant progress has been made.

## **Defining and Evaluating Land Use Progress**

Before proceeding with the evaluation of land use progress for the past four years, it is useful to think about what land use “progress” is and how it might be evaluated. There are always problems with noting and evaluating progress. Obvious change, such as major new development, is apparent and can be evaluated. However, in some cases that may be just as important, or even more important, simply retaining and/or maintaining the existing land use pattern is an achievement. Many of the District’s stable neighborhoods can be characterized in this way. “Progress,” therefore, can be less dramatic and thus harder to measure. It also should be noted that universal agreement on what constitutes “land use progress” does not exist and differences among these definitions can be quite contentious.

## **Major Factors Shaping Land Use Progress, FY 1999-2002**

Several factors have led to land use progress in the District:

- *New Administration:* The Williams Administration came into office in January 1999 and has been key in accelerating land use progress during the past four years. The Mayor, with strong support from the Council, has placed major emphasis on rebuilding the planning function within the District and providing a more focused approach to implementing development projects. New initiatives, including the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the Government Centers program, a renewed focus on improving Georgia Avenue, and a series of strategies to foster commercial and residential development, have been developed. A major effort has been made to coordinate neighborhood planning and implementation and connect community concerns and desires to the budget process through the Neighborhood Action Program and the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPS). The Council has been part of this progress by supporting planning and development initiatives, enacting significant legislation and acting on plans that have come before it.
- *Good Economic Conditions:* The District has benefited from good economic conditions that have produced the largest development boom in the city’s history. Although some sectors of the economy have been weak in the last two years, interest in the city’s development has remained strong.

- *Strong Development Community:* Washington is fortunate to have a strong development community made up of local and national developers, both large and small. Many developers have experience with a variety of projects, are focused on housing and are willing to take on difficult projects.
- *Active community groups, community organizations, and citizens:* Washington has a high level of community organization and involvement. Community leaders have played lead roles in driving land use activity and in seeking to modify land use proposals to address local issues.

## Contributors to this Report

To develop this report, the Office of Planning worked closely with other District agencies. Each of these agencies is charged with improving and/or protecting the city's physical environment. They include:

- Office of Planning (OP)
- Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Office of the Corporation Counsel (OCC)
- Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA)
- Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Office of Zoning (OZ)
- National Capital Revitalization Corp. (NCRC)
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED)
- D.C. Housing Finance Agency (DCHFA)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Office of Property Management (OPM)
- District Department of Transportation (DDOT)
- D.C. Public Schools (DCPS)